

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE

A Study of Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians and the Ephesians

MEDITATE: *Ephesians 1:15-23*

Quiet your heart before the Lord. This does not necessarily mean that your environment needs to be silent, although this can be helpful. Set aside a time free from distractions to focus on the passage as you read and meditate on it.

These instructions may help you develop a method for meditating on our passage each week. You may want to incorporate all or some of these ideas, whatever is helpful.

- ❖ Read the passage, slowly and prayerfully asking the Lord to speak to you from his word. Take several minutes to mull over the passage.
- ❖ Read the passage aloud and again take several minutes to give careful thought to it.
- ❖ Listen to the passage being read aloud. You may want to have someone else read it to you, or use a Bible program such as biblegateway.com or YouVersion, a free Bible app.
- ❖ Read the passage in other translations.

Finally, consider the following questions:

What words or phrases stand out to me? Why?


What questions does the passage raise that I want to know more about?

MEDITATE

“In growing to know God...there is no substitute for the discipline of Bible study and Scripture reading and meditation. We cannot bypass the handbook God has given us and then expect that we can know him in our own way. The only god we can know in our own way is a god that we make in our own image.”¹

—Sinclair Ferguson

DIG IN: *Read Ephesians 1:15-23.*

1. Paul wants the Ephesians to know God deeply. He rejoices at the evidence of their faith and love (vv. 15-16), and moves immediately to prayer. What does Paul ask of the Father for the Ephesians? (v. 17;  1 Cor. 2:6-16)

REVELATION

When Paul writes about revelation in verse 17, he is referring to “making known the mystery [of] God’s saving plan [which]...had already been made known in Christ (vv. 9,10), but the readers needed to grasp its full significance, not least of all their own place within it.”²

2. Paul then prays that “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened” (v. 18). This is a beautifully simple, poetic representation of the profound interaction which occurs between the Holy Spirit and our teachable spirits as he “guide[s] us into all truth” (Jn. 16:13).

When we think of the heart, we tend to think of the center of feelings and emotions. In contrast, in the Bible the heart is “the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action—‘the wellspring of life’ (Pr. 4:23).”³

Knowing this, what do you think Paul means when he prays for the eyes of their hearts to be enlightened? (You might wish to consider these verses: Mt. 6:22-23; 2 Cor. 4:6. 📖 Pr. 2:1-6)

3. Paul prays that the Ephesians will comprehend the fullness of three particular blessings they have received from God through Christ. What are they? (vv. 18b, c, 19a)

4. The first two of these blessings look ahead to the future. What insight does 1 Peter 1:3-9, 13 give us into these first two blessings?

5. When Paul prays that the Ephesians will know a third blessing from God – his “incomparably great power for us who believe” (v. 19a) – what two examples does he give us of that power?

6. What do you think Paul is getting at by using these two examples?

7. You may not feel like you have hope, riches, and “incomparably great power” (v. 19), but that does not mean it isn’t true! Paul will have more to say about this power in his letter to the Ephesians. For now, pray along with Paul “that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened” (v. 18) so that you would know these things to be true and that they would have significant influence on your life.

8. The exalted Jesus Christ is positioned forever “far above *all* rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked” (v. 21, emphasis added) in the heavenly realms. Considering this, what is the astounding truth about our relationship with him as believers? (Is. 57:15; Rom. 8:38-39)

EXALTATION

“Where [Jesus] sat down, that is, at God’s *right hand*, is as significant as the fact that he sat down [instead of having to stand]....In the Old Testament the Lord’s right hand is the position of favour, victory, and power. For Christ, then, to be seated at God’s right hand meant sharing the Father’s throne... [and] the full authority of the Father.”⁴

9. Verses 22-23 underscore the supreme authority of Jesus Christ.
- a. What is the position of everything in the universe relative to him? (v. 22a)
 - b. That said, what intimate picture does Paul use to describe Jesus’ relationship to the church? (vv. 22b-23a)
 - c. What is the significance of this relationship? (Consider verse 23b.)
10. Jesus Christ, supreme power and authority over all, loves us personally and individually. Where have you seen his power displayed in your life? When have you been comforted by his close presence?

PAUSE TO WORSHIP

Re-read Ephesians 1:15-23. Take time to interact with the Lord about the passage.


“Once we’ve meditated to focus, understand, and remember, we will normally find our hearts inclined to worship. So, we pause to lift our gaze to the excellencies of Christ, to bend our eyes off of the world, to express thanksgiving and adoration when we pray. Meditation leads to delight when the Holy Spirit inclines our hearts to see and savor how glorious God is.”⁵

- ❖ How do I respond to the beauty I see in God’s will, work, and ways in this passage?

- ❖ In what ways do I see Jesus ,“the One [God] loves” (v. 6), more clearly through this passage?
- ❖ Is there a song or hymn that comes to mind that helps express my response to the passage?

REFLECT & PRAY

- ❖ How can I take what I’m learning from this passage and make it my own? Is there something specific to believe, do, not do, be grateful for, etc.?
- ❖ How does this passage help me see myself and others differently?
- ❖ Pray the passage: Use the passage as a basis to talk to God about the things you are learning, seeing, and longing for as well as ways the passage speaks to your current life experiences.

* Indicates passages for further study

¹ Ferguson, Sinclair B., *A Heart for God* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth, 1978), 8.

² O’Brien, Peter T, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 132.

³ *The NIV Study Bible*, ed. Kenneth Barker, 10th Anniversary Edition, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 783, footnote for Psalm 4:7.

⁴ O’Brien, 141.

⁵ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-steps-to-meditating-on-your-bible/>